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JOURNAL

OF A

TRIP TO ICELAND.

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The Library

of the

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From the collection

of the late

Chester H. Thordarson

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JOURNAL

OF A

TRIP TO ICELAND.

BY A

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

Revised by G. B. M.

London:

S. STRAKER & SONS, 26, LEADENHALL STREET.

1882.

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Journal of a Trip to Iceland.

Tuesday, June 28, 1881.—Dined at the Holborn Restaurant, our party numbering four—Alice, Howard, Charlie, and I, the two former joining us for a parting meal. After dinner we all set off to King's Cross, to catch the 9 p.m. Edinburgh express, and there Charlie and I took leave of Alice and Howard. As the train moved off from the platform, I fancy we both experienced a sensation of separation from our dear ones, and some forebodings at the thought of the long and strange sea-voyage before us; and the remote distance, and the isolated (no joke intended) position of the country for which we were bound, seemed to us now, for the first time, matters of the utmost gravity; indeed, so much, that we almost regretted the undertaking in which we had engaged ourselves. But the very important and difficult business of arranging our baggage in the compartment, so that we should be able to pass the night in tolerable comfort, soon

Jan 47 Thordarson purchase

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engrossed our attention, and left no room in our minds for doubts and fears. The guard of the train had evidently been greatly impressed by the superb figure and queenly presence of Alice, for he paid us such deferential attention as the insignificant and unattractive appearance and bearing of Charlie and myself could in nowise have called forth. So, in our borrowed glory, we travelled on in the greatest comfort, sleeping well and undisturbed all the way, the aforesaid impressed guard allowing no one to approach our compartment.

Wednesday, June 29.—We reached the "modern Athens" at 7 a.m., booked at once for Leith, and arrived there at 8. We at once walked to the office of Messrs. Slimon, where we found a Mr. Bridges, a very pleasant man, who was ready to give us all the information we could possibly want, and to make arrangements for the transfer of our baggage to the steamer in which we were to sail for Iceland. We left him for the *Commercial Hotel*, where we performed our very necessary ablutions and hungrily devoured a most welcome breakfast. The *Cameons* steamer, belonging to the firm of Messrs. R. & D. Slimon,

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in which we had taken berths, has for some years been employed in the season in taking tourists to Iceland. She lay in the dock close by, so as soon as we had breakfasted we repaired thither, and examined our berths and saw to the safety of our baggage. This done, we took the tram for Prince's Street, which, in our green experience, we thought must be the finest in Europe. We spent some time at the Scott Memorial, from the top of which we had a magnificent view, and then turned to the *Royal Hotel*, for what we conjectured would be our last decent meal for a long time to come. After our lunch we returned to Leith, and found at Mr. Slimon's office several other men, like us, bound for Iceland by the *Cameons*. We wrote letters home, and then went on board, where a good number of ladies and gentlemen were assembled, many of whom were friends of Mr. Slimon, and had come on deck to take leave of him and to see him off. Getting out of the dock was a tiresome business, as there was a great crowd of vessels, and, to make matters more annoying, we had to lay to for a considerable time, waiting for a hulk laden with coals, which the *Cameons* was to have the honour of towing

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to Reykjavik. We are told this will prolong our voyage. (Comforting hearing for Charlie.) Then, the slow business of fixing the hawsers being completed, a steam tug came alongside, and carried off all friends who were not bound for Iceland. As we steamed away they gave us a sickly cheer, thinking, no doubt —as Charlie does—what fools we were. However, the steward soon summoned us to drown our griefs in the cup which cheers but which does not over-stimulate, and the sea being very smooth, all the passengers shewed up in the saloon, among them a Scot, who was to have shared our state-room and have the third berth. Not liking the snuffy and general unwholesome appearance he presented when I first met him in our quarters, I determined to get rid of him. With the help of a new acquaintance I had picked up the same day, I represented to him that I was a most undesirable fellow-passenger, being always fearfully sick during the whole time I am at sea, my new friend adding confidentially to the Scot that I was subject to the most bloodthirsty fits, during which I amused myself with firing pistols at any object which caught my attention, and that it was necessary, while these

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murderous attacks were on, that my friends should be on their guard and watch me most carefully. The Scot grunted, spat, and retired, and we were soon made aware that he had chosen other quarters, for the steward shortly afterwards appeared with a parson, to whom he said, "This is your berth, sir," pointing out the Scot's late bed.

NOTE.—We had every reason to congratulate ourselves on the exchange, as the Scot's complete ignorance of the most elementary principles of civilized behaviour rendered him hardly less objectionable than I should have been had the fictitious character he had had given him of me been a reality, the passion for pistol firing included. His expectoratory accomplishment—which he kept well up by constant practice—was a positive annoyance to all about him during the whole passage, and troubled us as much as the sea. However, familiarity not yet having bred contempt for my fits, he kept clear of us that day, and we enjoyed a fair amount of comfort, and went tolerably happy to bed at night, and slept as well as if we had been at home.

Thursday, June 30.—Our clerical companion is from Edinburgh, and was formerly at Great Yarmouth. He was by common consent allowed the great privilege of dressing first in the morning. His dressing is an

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awful business, so long and engrossing, that we noticed he had no time to say his prayers. We thought the operation would never end; but it did, and at last we were able to get our meagre rinse, and get a mouthful of fresh air on deck. The monotony of a very slow day was somewhat broken by the business of making acquaintances while we towed our coal hulk, at snail's speed, past the Scottish coast. Among the passengers we got to know were a young Londoner, who was taking the sea voyage for the benefit of his health, and two elderly American gentlemen, who were going to Iceland to hunt. Our clergyman had determined to signalize himself in Iceland by rejecting the orthodox ponies, and tramp with a knapsack, Swiss fashion, and ascend Hecla. He is an old member of the Alpine Club, but appears to have done nothing but the very mole-hills of the Alps. We have a mysterious Frenchman on board, who has a state-room all to himself, from which he emerges at meal times only, and to which he gravely retires before he has fairly swallowed his last mouthful. He is travelling to cure asthma. The only steerage passengers are two young Icelanders. One has been travelling in Norway and Sweden, and, after an absence

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of five or six years, is returning to his native country to be a schoolmaster. The other has been living in America, where he emigrated a few years ago. He tells us that many of his countrymen emigrate to America, the *Cameons* frequently taking numbers of them to Leith, on their way to Liverpool, where they embark for the New World. I took a very elementary lesson in Icelandic from him, several other passengers sharing my attempts to produce utterances similar to those the Icelander delivered for our imitation. I fear the amusement he derived from our desperate grunts and chokings was out of all proportion to the benefit we received from his tuition. We number twenty passengers in all, most of us returning with the captain to Leith.

Friday, July 1.—When we took leave of each other last night the sea was shewing signs of liveliness, which made me anxious to turn in before it should be too late. I left the parson and some others playing cards in the saloon, and the game went on till one o'clock this morning. Both Charlie and I turned up at breakfast with the melancholy conviction that it would be our last meal in the saloon for some time

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to come. The sea is more lively to-day, so, after breakfast, we resolved to pass the day on deck, and the Americans started the game of *shuffleboard.* Dinner consisted of soup, which we took on deck, and after that sumptuous meal symptoms of the coming disturbance in our internal economy became more and more frequent. But for the existence of the captain's hard and fast rule that, no matter how much against the poor victim's will, down our throats food must go, I think many of us would have observed a solemn fast, food being positive physic. We made Pentland Firth very early in the day, and rapidly (our coals considered) approached the broad Atlantic. Several small islands came in view, the population of which may be thus roughly classed:—I., those which run on four legs; II., those which fly. Habits primitive. The foregoing classification is not exhaustive; there are other humble occupiers of the native soil, but they don't seem to be of sufficient importance to appear on the same page as the above, so I leave them out. By this time several of the passengers had succumbed, the American, among the weak ones. Momentarily expecting defeat Charlie and myself stood out against the influence of

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a horrible sea till late at night, when, quaking with cold, and very, very miserable, we made a rush for our berths.

Saturday, July 2.—Both in bed; too ill to journalize.

Sunday, July 3.—We were told that the saloon tables were almost deserted yesterday. Agonizing cries of "Steward, Steward!" proceeded from the prostrate passengers all day. Scarcely a man escaped except that parson, and the rougher the sea became the more he ate. How, at first, we had envied, and then hated that man; at least, I know I did. He would shout lustily for jam and marmalade, which, to everybody's disgust, he gorged like a great greedy boy, till we could have shaken him, though I do not think that there was any ill-feeling towards him, except that which was engendered by sea-sickness. At 8 o'clock this morning Charlie made a desperate plunge from his berth into his clothes, having been in bed for thirty hours, and went up and washed on deck. I, with trembling limbs and melancholy visage, followed humbly, feeling sure that my time was come. I crawled up to Charlie, exhibited my symptoms, and, too miserable to remonstrate, at Charlie's order swallowed a glass of hot water! But

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jubilate! I began to mend at once, and in half-an-hour ate a chop. I have had no more unpleasant sensations since. We had morning service on deck, our voracious friend officiating. As the sea was very rough, he recommended those whose conscience would not permit them to sit during the prayers, to stand and not kneel; and, after seeing one erect supplicant sent flying in the middle of a prayer, nobody seemed disposed to experiment on the treacherous planks. The service was short, and we spent most of the time afterwards in trying to find our sea-legs. Many of us took our meals on deck, the steward bringing them up to us, and when turning-in time came Charlie positively refused to descend, so will stay all night in the chart-room, where our good steward has made him quite comfortable. I preferred risking my reputation to losing my berth, and made a drunken rush down the ladder to my quarters.

Monday, July 4.—This lovely morning we began eagerly looking out for land, and the spirits of all rose in consequence. Somebody proposed shooting sea-fowl, but the captain suggested shooting bottles from the mizen-mast. So we had them strung up one at a time,

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and had good sport—both the adventurous sportsmen and the spectators. A terrible Atlantic roll was on all day, indicating that there had been a heavy gale somewhere. Among its many accomplishments, the powers of the *Cameons* as a roller is not its least; so we had full benefit of the sea. Charlie and I have to-day put in an appearance in the saloon, and were greeted with a welcome of clapping of hands at tea time. It seems to be the fashion to clap a convalescent when he re-appears for the first time in the saloon. The captain shook hands with and congratulated us. He has been most kind to everybody. We are beginning to make plans for trips into the interior, and young Erskine—our London friend—seems eager to accompany Charlie and me. We had a magnificent sunset at 11.15, and went to bed in broad daylight at 12.45. I did not sleep, but lay in a delightful state of half-wakefulness, imposing upon myself with the delusion that the noises of the engine and screw were the music of military bands! (I leave the suggestion for the benefit of my musical friends.)

Tuesday, July 5.—Charlie was first to dress, the parson second, I last; and so, on arriving on deck,

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found I was too late to see some whales, one of which had actually turned a somersault over the hawser by which our coals are towed. We were now very near land, skirting the end of a glacier of very peculiar form, whose curiously winding course we traced down the side of the first mountain I had ever seen from the sea. It appeared about 12,000 feet high. Our course lay towards the Westmann Islands, and we seemed to be really in the realms of the sea-fowl, which were around us in vast numbers, some hovering over, and some swimming about the steamer. Guns were brought out, and many of us spent the morning in the not very elevating amusement of taking the lives of the innocent creatures. The Westmann Islands came in sight about 12 o'clock, and, with the aid of a glass, we could distinguish a boat, from which some natives were fishing. These islands appear to be extremely rugged, precipitous rocks rising abruptly from the sea, vegetation being represented solely by patches of scrubby pasturage. All day the coast of the mainland of Iceland remained in sight, from which extraordinary reefs ran out for miles, often developing into lines of isolated rocks, having the appearance of lines of towers.

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Altogether, we had an interesting and amusing day, nearly all the passengers putting in an appearance on deck before it was over. Even the Americans, who had both been very much overcome by their passage (and one of them seriously so), shewed up, and tickled us excessively with their Yankee-English. We discovered that Erskine was an adept at figure drawing, so we set him to work immortalizing the passengers. While he was thus employed, the Scot appeared in our midst, and, afraid to refuse, I suppose, he consented to my proposal that he should be "done." He submitted his charming person to my care, and I "posed" him, wringing his neck and twisting his head into a position quite foreign to its natural one, with all the skill of a practical, fashionable photographer of professional beauties. When I had so far screwed his head round as to render its return to its proper position the barest of possibilities, I clawed at him and held him in a grip in no degree inferior in power and discomfort to the photographer's rack. The artist then proceeded, and the result of his effort was worthy at once of the subject and of the artist. (N.B.—The reader will from this gather that I am a modest young man. He is

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right.) We are informed that we might be probably two days more making the passage, yet we are in no way dismayed, for the awful business of making acquaintance with Neptune is over, and the whole company is on good terms with him. We sat up till 3 o'clock a.m. English time, having many a hearty laugh over our daylight night.

Wednesday, July 6th.—We awoke to find ourselves anchored near a French sloop of war, with its gunboat, a Danish man-of-war, and a number of other vessels, in Reykjavik harbour. The small town of Reykjavik looked like a scattered village, of which the most imposing buildings were the tall gaunt-looking store-houses. The country all round is wild and dreary-looking. We went ashore as soon as possible, carefully remembering to have in readiness Ted Palmer's letters of introduction to the Lord Bishop of Iceland, the Rector of the University, and the chief guide, Zoega. We met the last-named gentleman immediately on landing, and at once presented our letter, and made our request for ponies for the interior, which he, however, could not promise to have in readiness till Saturday. We find many of the people here speak

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English—quite well enough to afford help to us poor benighted Britons. One pointed out to us the House of Parliament, and then kindly took us to the University. The exterior of this building is odd in the extreme; very plain, and of a complexion decidedly bilious, being painted all over *yellow*. Our friendly guide took us up to the Rector's rooms, the door of which was opened to us by the Rector himself. I handed him my card and the letter of introduction. In broken English he invited us in, and immediately sent for an English-speaking young lady, a Miss Jonsen, mentioned in Col. Brine's pamphlet on Iceland. Till her arrival conversation had been limited, but now it was carried on with spirit, the Rector joining in as well as he could. After some time, a good-natured-looking, fat little dame came in, whom the Rector introduced as "my wife," dressed in Icelandic fashion. She wore the coif, adorned with a big, dangling tassel, and a gaily-coloured frock, of wondrous shape and make. She did not appear to know a word of English, so we could merely bow and shake hands, and look all sorts of unutterable civilities at each other. I am afraid we were rude enough to feel amused, and to experience

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a strong desire to burst out into a loud guffaw at the homely and altogether greasy appearance our fat little dumpling of a hostess presented. Soon after her arrival we were ushered into the grand chamber of the establishment to partake of coffee. The room was stuffy (Icelanders appear to have a strong aversion to fresh air) and not elaborately furnished. In the middle of the floor lay a square of carpet, upon which stood a small table bearing the coffee service. The coffee pot, cream jug, sugar basin, and spoons were of silver; the cups, saucers, and plates of china, each piece monopolizing some particular colour and design, being in this respect somewhat in advance of the orthodox harlequin five o'clock tea service. Round the room were arranged a few chairs, a sofa, and a piano, which last-named article of furniture was presented by some Cambridge friends to Miss Jonsen last year. The sofa formed seats for two at the table, and the Rector hospitably, and somewhat ceremoniously, requested Charlie and myself to take them, whilst the two ladies and he took the high-backed chairs. We felt ourselves at a great disadvantage in not being able, from our ignorance of Icelandic, to make suitable acknowledgements of

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the kindly hospitality showered upon us by the good Rector and the ladies, and, after spending about an hour-and-a-half, Charlie signalled to me to prepare to depart. I might here say that the solid portion of the repast consisted of cake, which was, as was also the coffee, exceedingly good. In accordance with the custom of the country, the ladies waited upon the men. Zoega had to be seen again, and we then returned to the steamer to luncheon. A fishing excursion for the afternoon was proposed, and, just as we were leaving the steamer, a Mr. Barrington, an Irish gentleman, came on board to take his passage to England. He and his brother, he told us, had been in Iceland about a month, and there and then insisted upon our taking whisky with him. Learning that we were going out fishing, he took us ashore in his boat, and ordered fishing tackle, bait, and a boat for us, and then kindly pointed out to us where we had better go. He saw us row off, and, indeed, so delighted did he seem to meet Englishmen again, I thought he would have joined us. After catching as many codling as we wanted, we returned to the steamer to dinner. The captain had proposed a visit to the hot springs in the vicinity of

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Reykjavik, so, accordingly, he took us ashore in his gig, and we walked to the place—about three miles. The hot water boiled out of the earth in the middle of a small river, and it appears the place was used as a general washing establishment for the townsfolk. Tubs are taken out by the women, who wash all night long "in broad daylight." Some of the women made us *café noir*, and in return a cronier was given, when the lady recipient, with the greatest simplicity, immediately kissed the gentleman donor. After visiting the Barringtons we got on board, and at 2.30 a.m. went to bed.

Thursday, July 7.—This was a lovely day, and very warm; we had the fish for breakfast caught yesterday. Our arrangements for going into the interior were now progressing, and I called upon the Barringtons to ask for details. All the baggage had been taken ashore, and the ordeal of packing up for the interior had to be gone through. This was no slight work—there were so many things to think of. Tinned meats, soups, and sardines were purchased at the Stores, but we had, fortunately, brought from England a good supply of porridge and sugar. Early in the morning I had met

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the younger Barrington, and walked with him towards his tent, which had been pitched just outside the town. He astonished me very much by saying, "I think I have met you before; in Switzerland, at Grindlewald, in 1876." He remembered that Carrie and Alice were with me at the time, and that he wanted me to go up the Eiger with him. Of course we soon became fast friends; he insisted upon my having breakfast in his tent, where his man-servant he had brought with him from Ireland had everything prepared. My visit proving not a short one, Charlie came to look me up. He was made to have breakfast also, and then we went back to Zoega's place, finished packing, and went on board to luncheon. Several gentlemen who had come out by the steamer with us were going into the interior, and were therefore busy, like ourselves, making arrangements. Some of the passengers who were returning by the *Cameons*, and had made an excursion to Thingvallir the day before, now began to appear very much "done up" after hard and fatiguing riding. During the evening the captain lent us his gig to visit the Eider Duck Islands, about two or three miles off. We saw plenty of duck, but, of course, did

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not kill any, as the birds are preserved for their feathers, and penalties are incurred if any are killed or shot at. In the town there was great revelry. Mr. Slimon, the owner of the *Cameons*, was being entertained by the principal inhabitants, and an address was presented him on the occasion.

Friday, July 8.—Having been up till nearly 3 a.m. for several nights in succession, none of us awoke until the steward rang the bell. Breakfast time was extremely pleasant. Everybody was much interested in our departure and expedition. The American gentlemen had brought out a large tub of biscuits from Leith, and were generous enough to give us as many as we thought we should want. Little did we realize at the time the value of such a present; it turned out an immense boon. Collecting the remainder of our worldly goods we made haste ashore. Nearly all the passengers, except the Americans—who intended to meet us in the vicinity of Hecla—came to see us off; but it was mid-day before we were able to effect a start. Our cavalcade consisted of sixteen ponies, Zoega's nephew acting as guide, and a boy, whom we christened Joe, accompanied him, to help keep the

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ponies in order. Each person had a spare pony, six being required for the baggage. After an affectionate leave-taking of all our friends, we rode off through the town. When we had gone a couple of miles, the way lay over a wilderness of mossy lava, and several small streams had to be forded. It should be mentioned there are no roads whatever in the interior of Iceland, and, as far as I can see, there never will be any. The first farm-house was reached about 5 p.m. A farm-house in Iceland differs somewhat from that suggested by the ordinary acceptation of the word. That now reached was built of turf and blocks of lava, the gable end of the house being formed of rough wood work. One had to creep along a dark cavern kind of passage, keeping the head well down, as the place did not admit of standing upright, until an apartment was reached in which all the people, consisting of the farmer, his wife, children, and as many people as they employ—generally several of both sexes—sleep. The bedsteads, fixed permanently to the floor, are arranged on both sides. A small window in the gable end lights up the apartment, and under this generally stands a small table, the beds being close to it on either side. It was

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into this kind of room that we now found ourselves, and we took our seats on the bedstead at either side of the table. Presently, the farmer's wife served us with some excellent coffee, for which we had to pay dearly. The name of the place was Ladrisbotenrd. Once again in our saddles, we rode as fast as the lava beds would allow. Here and there valleys of comparatively smooth grass were passed, but they soon changed to much rougher ground. A great deal of the surface was formed of hummocks, on the top of which grew grass and moss, the whole greatly resembling a vast grave-yard, and, as may be imagined, it was extremely trying to the ponies. However, these clever and sure-footed, tough little creatures made slight work of getting over such ground. About 8.30 we ascended a mountain ridge, climbing amongst rocks and lava, heaped up in the most fantastic shapes. Descending, we came to another farm-house, near Thingvallir Lake, situate in a most desolate region. Here we had supper of biscuits, coffee, and milk, the ponies having a good rest, feeding on the grass. The farmer offered to let his son go on with Joe whilst we rested and had supper. Zoega said by that means we

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should be able to ford the Sog river before the ferryman went to bed, and, accordingly, the offer was gladly accepted. It was now about ten hours since we had left Reykjavik, and there were yet three or four more hours further before we could get to the other side of the Sog river. The sugar we had here was a kind of coarse sugar candy, but we afterwards met with real loaf sugar at other farm-houses. Cups and saucers were limited in number—there were only two cups, both of different patterns and broken—so we had to drink our coffee in turn. Charlie politely offered the farmer some tobacco, but Zoega, interpreting, informed us that he was unwilling to take it because he had no pipe. They had only one pipe, and the man had that who was away in the mountains attending the sheep, so he could not accept any tobacco. The women of the country think nothing of riding astride upon bare-backed ponies, and very frequently do so. We had seen several during the day. Not a vestige of a tree, however, had we come across. Zoega said there were no trees in Iceland; there was a photograph of one at Reykjavik, but we had not had the pleasure of seeing that. It was long past midnight when we came near

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the house of the farmer who acted as ferryman for the Sog river. As soon as we had called him up, he jumped on a spare pony, and rode off to get the boat ready—quite three miles away. After leaving his house, midges began to get troublesome, but Zoega said they were always numerous where there was good trout fishing. These midges soon became a great torment, and gave us and the animals little peace. Arriving at the ferry, all the ponies were stripped of their baggage, saddles, and bridles, and then whipped into the river—quite 400 yards wide—and made to swim to the other side. One pony refused to go; he got about half-way across twice, each time turning back, and at last we had to tow him from the stern of the boat. It took three journeys before we had got everything and everybody across. The charge for the ferry was three croniers—cheap enough for all the work the farmer had had after being called up in the middle of the night. It appears the ferries are under the supervision of the Government, the boats being kept by farmers on each side of the river. After catching the ponies and re-adjusting the baggage, on we rode. It was 2.30 a.m. before the farm-house came in sight, near which Zoega said it

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would be well to camp. As soon as we rode up he jumped off his pony, and climbed the earthwork heaped up at the gable end of the house to the bed-room window, waking up the folks inside by calling out; and, carrying on a conversation in this manner for a short time, he then returned to us, saying he had asked leave to pitch the tent, and for some milk. By 4 a.m. we had got the tent up, and then lay down to sleep on mother earth, telling Zoega to have some trout for breakfast at 10 o'clock. Sixteen hours had elapsed since we rode out of Reykjavik, and we had had nothing to eat and drink except biscuits and coffee. In this first day's ride we had learnt the value of the Icelandic ponies, sure-footed creatures as they are, and all agreed that, what with crossing bogs and riding over rocks and lava, it would be best to leave ones nerve's at home.

Saturday, July 9.—We woke at 9.30, and rushed off for our bath to a most inviting stream, which ran through the valley, and which was but a hundred yards from the tent; but the enjoyment of our dip was greatly interfered with by the swarms of midges which hovered round us. Charlie, while howling under the

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torture of his own agonies, encouraged me by assuring me they did not sting! Some fun was, however, available. One confiding member of our party innocently laid his sponge on the stream, which was running at about the rate of five miles an hour. The result may be conjectured. The broken-hearted proprietor of the sponge, in a costume somewhat lighter than the traditional postage stamp and spectacles, made for the bank, and chased his property. He captured it after a good run. While dressing we were fearfully plagued by fresh reinforcements of midges; but Zoega had comfort for us, informing us that at times they came in flights so vast as to obscure the sun. Here's a prospect! I was told off to make the porridge for breakfast. Instructed by Zoega, I crawled into the farm-house for hot water, making my way in by a dark kind of subterraneous passage. When I got accustomed to the smoky darkness of the kitchen, I saw it was built of bits of rock and turf, and that the fire-place was a mere inclosure of loose stone. Round about were other lumps or slabs of rock, to be used as resting-places for kitchen wares. The soot draped the place like webs in a wine vault, there being

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no escape for smoke but a small hole in the roof. The fuel consisted of dried manure, the usual substitute in Iceland for coal and wood, which in most districts are very scarce commodities. I learn that this kitchen is a very fair specimen of what we may expect to find. The smoke was so dense, Zoega and I were compelled to kneel on the clay floor to be able to conduct our experiments in the direction of porridge. The farmer's wife brought in a huge pot, very dirty and greasy, in which to cook our meal. We rejected that, and then she brought us a disused preserved meat tin, in which I was successful in making the porridge. Then the question arose as to what it was to be served up in. The dinner service of the establishment proved to consist of *one soup plate*, and from this we all ate our porridge, without the aid of forks or spoons—articles evidently looked upon as superfluous by the bimana of Iceland. The farmer's wife afterwards subscribed a fine trout, boiled in the aforesaid rejected kettle; the fish, and the excellent coffee which followed close upon it, were delicious. There was no vulgar, ostentatious display of electro-plate in that simple dwelling; where our pocket-knives failed we resorted

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to the use of our fingers in despatching our meal. Any fastidious traveller who contemplates a prolonged stay in this neighbourhood had better come supplied with all his accustomed creature comforts; he'll find none awaiting him here. At mid-day we went off to fish. Words fail to describe our sufferings. The atmosphere seemed out of doors to consist of midges. They got down our backs, up our legs, into our boots, into our hair, up our sleeves, into our noses and mouths. We no longer breathed air, but midges. After capturing two trout (very good ones, by the way) without disjointing our rods, we fought our way back to the tent. I valiantly brought up the rear, with my head wrapped up in my mackintosh, having the agonizing howls of Charlie and Erskine to guide me. It being out of the question to dream of out-door amusement, we resigned ourselves to sleep in the tent, till Zoega roused us up for a luxurious meal of trout and curlew. They had been cooked in butter, a fact to be appreciated when we remind our friends that there was but one plate in the house—the one which figured at breakfast to hold our porridge. Now it became literally *the* dish of the repast, its not too ample proportions affording just

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sufficient room to hold the fishes and birds. The party was helped from this choice dish, each individual using his left hand for a plate, reserving the right hand to hold a pocket-knife wherewith to piece up his food. We had no napkins, yet no one of the party took a mean advantage of the proximity of his neighbour's coat tails. After grave consultation, we decided that we had better make arrangements for moving off from this place to-morrow morning, as it would be impossible to enjoy any out-door recreation in the presence of these swarms of midges. However, we determined to make a desperate attempt to continue our fishing; so, after our plans were arranged, we sallied forth in fear and trembling. We presented an interesting spectacle. We had covered up every inch of our skin, wrapping our heads up till nothing appeared but our eyes, my own being imperfectly protected by glasses. One of the ladies offered me a gauze veil, which Zoega informed me she had worn on her head all her life! I greedily accepted her kindly-meant offer, but on its coming into the close neighbourhood of my nose, that organ told me that any amount of midges would be preferable. We somehow found our way to the river

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side, and, while Zoega vigorously brushed us to dislodge the midges, we put our rods together; but, alas for the amusement which we had promised ourselves, it was impossible to see or feel anything but midges! They found their way into all the folds of our dress. In hopes of improving matters, Charlie and Erskine crossed to the other side in the boat; but all to no purpose, the enemy drove them back, and we unscrewed our rods and returned to the tent and went to bed, where we found the cold so intense we had to use our mackintoshes to cover ourselves, though they were sodden with rain. I may here say that when we took off our boots we shook out of them scores of dead midges.

Sunday, July 10.—This morning there was a perceptible decrease in the number of midges, so we were able to take our bath a little leisurely. At breakfast all the female population of the settlement assembled at the door of the tent and gazed at us, and added to our enjoyment by indulging in the national disgusting habit of spitting about with such freedom as would have alarmed even a most make-yourself-at-home Yankee! After the meal was over we had the satis-

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faction of hearing that our departure would be delayed some three hours in consequence of the ponies having strayed off. However, we managed to set off about 11.30. During the day we saw great numbers of golden plover, curlew, and snipe; and Erskine, during the morning, shot a raven, which he hopes to stuff. On our way we met several women riding, as is the wont of ladies of this country who are unable to get saddles, astride on the bare-backed ponies. The country we passed through was frightfully desolate, consisting of dismal stretches of bog and lava. Here and there we passed a farm-house situated in the middle of a small oasis. These patches of verdure we were, at Zoega's instruction, careful to avoid, as the ponies would have made great ravages in the grass the farmers were reserving for hay. About 4.30 we reached the Hvítá river, a broad and rapid current. At the farm-house, close by the ferry, Zoega found a ferryman, and we and the ponies were soon over. Here we were in sight of Hecla, which was about 50 miles away. We had scarcely pitched our tents when the farmer's wife brought us a liberal supply of refreshing coffee. The family of the farmer were

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very much delighted with our watches and guns; and a small looking-glass which I had with me was an object of great wonder to the younger members of the family. They had never seen one before. We afterwards went into the farm-house, which we found superior to any others we had entered. In the big room of the house we found an old bedridden man quite blind, whose only occupation seemed to be taking snuff. We managed to seat ourselves on the beds, and a dish of salmon was subsequently prepared for us. Zoega also cooked some plover; so with our champagne we managed to make a capital meal. For the repast a spoon was wanted, and the mistress picked one off a bed, licked it, and then polished it up on her very dirty skirts before presenting it to us. During the evening it was discovered that the ponies were nowhere in sight, so two of the girls, about 12 and 14 years old, set off after them as fast as their bare legs and feet could carry them. They came back in triumph sitting astride on two of the animals, guiding them somehow without any bridle. When the ponies were secured, the girls, learning that I should like to shoot a wild duck or two, offered to

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show us a good place; they did, but we could not manage to do any execution, the ducks showing the greatest ingenuity in keeping in safe quarters.

All the children can read and write. The parents educate their children as well as they are able during the long winter days. Several of the young members of the family subscribed their names in my diary. They were very much interested in the contents of my bag; the needles, wax tapers, pincushion, &c., roused their curiosity immensely; and greatly delighted was the eldest girl when I gave her a few needles. At last our strangely-spent Sunday came to an end, and we retired to rest in our tent while the rain was pelting down, and the wind driving at the tent as if it would tear it to pieces.

Monday, July 11.—Early this morning we were roused with Zoega's "Good morning, Sir!" and the flapping of the canvas door as Zoega undid it. We made a good breakfast on porridge, biscuits and coffee, and then set off for Stóruvellir, after a very hearty farewell from the people of the house. Our way lay over enormous bogs, in which the ponies frequently sank up to their bellies, and then for

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many miles along the bank of the Thjórsa river (quite as wide as the Thames at London Bridge) till we came to the ferry. Near this Zoega took us into a mud-hut, built, for the accommodation of sick visitors, over a hot-air spring. Here sick people come and sit over a crack and inhale the hot air. The temperature was about 100 or 110 Fahrenheit. At some distance we espied the second wooden church we have seen since we left Reykjavik. According to custom the farmer's wife brought us coffee before we crossed, and when we were ready the farmer's son took us up, one after the other, in his arms and carried us through the water to the boat. The ponies swam the current, but owing to the velocity of the latter, the former reached the opposite bank a long distance down the stream, and when there they bolted. Charlie and I, on our ponies, gave chase, and after a half-hour succeeded in bringing them back, and we then got all in order and started off again. During the afternoon we shot two albatrosses. At about 6 o'clock we arrived at the minister's house at Stóruvellir, and were greatly surprised to find that the English clergyman, Mr. Woolnough, who had started to *walk* from Reykjavik with

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a knapsack, and the Belgian gentleman were already there. We all greeted each other very heartily at this pleasant meeting, Mr. Woolnough telling us that he had been obliged to give up his idea of walking and take to ponies after two days' tramp from Reykjavik. The minister's house was so roomy that we were able to dispense with the tent, the minister's wife readily offering us all the available room in the house. We arranged that the Belgian should have the guest bed-room, an apartment about six feet square, and that the rest of us would sleep on the floor of the guest chamber. We had hardly completed these arrangements for the night when our hostess brought us a welcome supply of boiled mutton and eggs. During our repast we entertained each other with stories of our journey, and the Belgian, who spoke English tolerably, contributed much matter for laughter by his description of his voyage to Iceland. He seemed to have had a pretty rough time of it on board, there being about thirty passengers, with accommodation for about twenty, and everybody was ill. While we were enjoying a mild dessert in the shape of prunes, supplied by the Belgian, the minister entered. He had been

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out in the saddle for ten hours, a fact which astonished us much when we learnt that he was seventy-one years old. He gave us a cordial welcome in English, shaking hands in a kind friendly way which was most delightful to us. Finding us making plans for visiting Hecla, he entered with great spirit into the arrangements, and brought out a number of *Native* for October, 1878, which contained a very good description of the lava beds we intend to visit. During the evening Zoega told me the farmer at Galtalækr, named Jonsen, who acted as guide to Hecla and the new lava beds, had arrived on his way to Reykjavik, but at Zoega's request had consented to return next day with us to act as local guide for those places. It did not take long to arrange our couches in the guest room. We moved the furniture close up to one side of the room and then spread our wraps on the floor to lie upon. Mr. Woolnough disposed of himself on a portable bedstead lent him by the Belgian. He presented an amusing spectacle. The minister had given him an eider-down quilt by way of bedclothes, and being considerably longer than the quiit his legs stuck out at the bottom like a couple of barrow

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handles. Erskine made a sketch of him, a copy of which the Belgian begged wherewith to illustrate a book on Iceland he was preparing.

Tuesday, July 12.—The first business of the morning was to remove all traces of beds in the guest room. It did not take long, and by the time breakfast was brought in, beds had been rolled up and the furniture arranged in its accustomed places. Our party was so large now that for the kind minister's sake we were anxious to move off as soon as possible; but a dolefully wet morning rendered our departure almost an impossibility until 10 o'clock, when the day cleared a bit. Here another impediment presented itself in the form of Icelandic etiquette; Zoega informing us that as we were there so late it would never do to leave before the 12 o'clock chocolate was served. It came, however, punctually to the minute, and not alone, but in company with capital pancakes, to be followed immediately by coffee and cake. The minister and his wife spared no pains to make our stay pleasant. We find he has about £120 a year, his living being the second largest in Iceland. At last our large party was ready, and we set off in good spirits across the finest pasture land we

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have seen yet, and in about two hours reached the farmhouse of Galtalœkr, where we have decided to stay for a few days in order to see Hecla well, and to visit the new lava beds formed by the last eruption of Hecla in 1876. As we had nothing in the larder, I went off with my gun soon after our arrival here and secured some wild fowl, which we had for tea. That meal we all took together in a large apartment recently added to the farmhouse, but which at present is unfurnished with doors. We were not teazed here by the curiosity of the natives, who are accustomed to foreigners; but we afforded them no small amount of amusement after tea in our rifle practice at champagne bottles. As we have arranged for a long day to-morrow, we have determined to retire early to the bundles of sweet hay Zoega has brought in for beds.

Wednesday, July 13.—The morning was disagreeable enough, but we had breakfast over and were ready to start by 8.30. We were a party of nine persons, each having two ponies. There being no baggage to burden the ponies, they galloped along at a good pace over the plains of cinders. The one astonishing feature of the scene was the entire absence of any morsel of vegeta-

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tion. The only change we had from the unvarying scene of desolation was the Fall of the Thjórsa. At regular intervals we rested the ponies and changed the saddles from one to another, then on again over miles of lava and sand. At last we reached the foot of a very steep ridge where we were obliged to dismount and lead the ponies up. After having toiled about half way up, I looked round and saw several of the party holding on the ponies' tails. In half an hour we had all reached the top, and were all pretty well winded. We made a short rest and then mounted and set off again. The new lava beds, which we soon came upon, presented a most wonderful sight; but before we could reach them we had again to dismount and make our way over the old lava, which afforded very uncertain footing. Our progress was slow and trying; it was often very difficult to preserve one's balance on the huge, rough cinders, and we got our hands wofully scratched and chipped. The extraordinary confusion and desolation is indescribable. Here and there were patches yellow with sulphur, and smoke rose from many cravasses. Our legs were just threatening to collapse from want of rest when we reached the foot

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of the first part of the actual crater, which is merely a huge mountain of cinders, for the ascent of which we had to encourage our trembling legs as best we could. As we approached the top the cinders got redder, and when it was gained the heat was very great as we looked down into the glowing hollow of the crater. All round us the plain of lava extended itself to the extent of some twenty square miles, from many parts of which the hot smoke was rising. We were very solemnly impressed by the situation, standing in this awful place so recently the scene of the horrible activity of the volcano. We made our way back to the ponies and then started off eagerly for the tent, which we reached about 6 o'clock, after having ridden sixty miles in nine hours and three-quarters. We refreshed ourselves with a cup of tea, no dinner being possible till Zoega should have cooked it. During the weary waiting for our well-earned dinner there were heard occasional melancholy wailings that no comfortable hotel was near in which to recover from the effects of the hardships we had undergone. We went to bed at once after dinner, for not only were we very weary but we have a long day in front of us to-morrow.

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Thursday, July 14.—We rose at five o'clock, and started for Hecla at 7.30. Mr. Woolnough and the Belgian joined us. We had a ride of some two hours over a plain of cinders before we began the real ascent of the mountain, which was up pretty steep snow slopes. It was a climb in every way objectionable. A driving wind, bringing snow and sleet, assailed us all the way up; indeed, the atmosphere was so opaque we could see nothing beyond our own party. After leaving the ponies the ascent occupied two hours at least, and on reaching the summit, from which we could see absolutely nothing, Jonson dug out a bottle from the cairn we found there; inscribing our names on the paper it contained, he enclosed it again in the bottle, and replaced it in the cairn. Fog now rendered seeing an impossibility, so we commenced our descent. Both in the ascent and descent the Belgian's difficulty in progressing was a great hindrance, as we were obliged to wait for him continually while he fumbled along, for the air was so thick it would have been dangerous to leave anybody alone. We found the ponies shivering with cold, and we pitied the poor creatures that they could not share our lunch of biscuits and whisky to restore circulation.

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We mounted as soon as we had appeased our hunger, and commenced our descent of a slope. Before we had got far, Mr. Woolnough and the Belgian were pitched over the heads of their ponies. On reaching the river, Jonson chose a point lower down the stream than that at which we had crossed in the morning, owing to the steep bank, which had rendered our landing difficult. But here the water was deeper, and the current so strong, that we were fearful of losing a pony or two. However, we managed to cross safely, and to see all our ponies land on the opposite side. As we got near our encampment we were delighted to see our American friends approaching. We had a demonstrative greeting from them, and all camped together. They have planned to ascend Hecla to-morrow, and afterwards to return to Reykjavik. We all dined together, and later on had a merry tea party, the fun of which was in nowised iminished by the discovery that all our sugar was compacted in one half-pound lump, which the Americans produced. However, we got a hammer from the farm, and broke it up into suitable pieces, and distributed it among the company. We lay about on the hay, chatting and poking fun at Woolnough,

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who was making frantic efforts to persuade a needle to work its way in and out his mackintosh, in his efforts to mend a big rent in it, which the high wind had effected near the top of Hecla. Our attention had been generally called to the rent by the Belgian's exclamation—"Mister Woolnough, your mack-in-tosh is brok-en!"

Friday, July 15.—The day opened splendidly, giving us a grand view of Hecla, for the ascent of which the Americans had already started, having taken leave of us last night. The Belgian also left our party to follow his own plans, but Woolnough remained with us, purposing to visit the geysirs in our company. Though our visit to this neighbourhood had not been one of unmitigated wretchedness, none of us, I think, felt any regret at leaving it, or any desire to revisit it. We had been entertained with a little domestic gossip while we were at the farm. Jonson, our Hecla guide, has been living at the house for some months, in order that he and the farmer's daughter, to whom he is engaged, may cement their loves in the more thorough knowledge of each other. It is the custom in Iceland for the lover to live in the house of the bride-elect for some time before the proposed marriage takes place,

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and if it turns out that the young people are unsuited to each other, the engagement is brought to an end. The future Mrs. Jonson came galloping up in spectacles, astride a saddleless horse, just as we were starting. She had been over the moor for ponies. We reached the ferry on the Thjórsa river at 12.30, and Woolnough here had to send back the horse which he had hired at the farm, and when we had crossed the river he set off to walk to the geysirs. In the farm-house we had coffee brought us as usual, and we were scarcely seated when Zoega espied Woolnough marching on quite in the wrong direction. He at once sent a farm man after him and had him back, and took a good deal of trouble in getting him a horse, telling him that he would find walking quite impossible. The boy Joe, who seemed to take a wicked delight in discovering Mr. Woolnough's mistakes, came roaring in with—"Prester, wrong road!" Woolnough was brought to reason by Zoega, and consented to the proposed arrangement that he should engage a horse from one farm to the next, and keep with us. We set off after coffee was over, and reached the minister's house at Hruni at 6 o'clock. Woolnough, who, having no baggage

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pony, got somewhat ahead of us, got there first and seized upon the only bed in the house. The minister came out to meet us and gave us a kindly welcome. We got permission from him to pitch our tent, and that was nearly all he could give us, having nothing in the way of provisions but salt sheep. We had, therefore, to depend upon Zoega to cajole the good people of the house to manufacture us some cake and pancakes, the former having very much the appearance of the vulgar blood-pudding one sees exposed for a penny a slice in an East-end London cook-shop. During the evening Woolnough and myself went into the church and tried the harmonium. We examined the hymn-book, but discovered that Icelandic music provoked stomach-ache. On returning to the tent we found that Woolnough has presented an old pair of boots to Zoega, which the latter had rejected and had passed on to Joe. Joe refusing them, we threw them after him on his departure from the tent, but unfortunately they disappeared down the kitchen chimney, and the last we saw of Joe that night was his heels as he made a plunge down the chimney after the boots! causing roars of laughter.

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Saturday, July 16.—After bidding adieu to the minister and paying only six croniers for ourselves and the ponies, we rode away at 9.30. Birds had to be shot on the way for dinner next day. About midday, after a tiring jounce over bog and marsh, we reached the Hvítá river where we had to take another ferry, always an hour's work at least. Two girls, daughters of the farmer, here took the management of the ponies, and on some breaking away made little ado in jumping astride on another and scouring the country to fetch the runaways back. After starting, Erskine shot some plover. Shooting generally caused us to fall very much in the rear, and this time, in endeavouring to catch the others, my pony twisted into a rut and landed me on my back, the first fall of the party after riding for seven consecutive days. About 1.30 we stopped at a farmhouse, called Drumbringstadir, for coffee. Whilst waiting, Zoega went inside and played "God save the Queen" on a concertina. We venture to have a look at the interior, but our olfactory nerves got the better of our curiosity, and we preferred taking our coffee outside. The only means of ventilation in the one apartment, which was used as a living and sleeping

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room, consisted of a little round hole about one inch in diameter in the framework of the tiny window let into the gable end of the roof. This hole was stopped up with a piece of wood resembling a cork, and when the apartment requires ventilation, this cork is pulled out for about a couple of minutes. All the farm-houses are roofed with turf. The women here rarely see strangers, I should say, as they were so extremely shy, and would only come to the door to take hasty glimpses of us and then run back. Leaving this place we had an extremely rough road. The geysirs were pointed out to us for three hours at least before we reached the spot. They are easily distinguished on account of the large column of steam always being given off. Just before reaching the plateau, where the geysirs are, a very wide and rapid river had to be forded. It was so large that Zoega thought it as well to ride alongside for some distance until he came to a part where it divided, and then it was crossed in three sections. As usual we nearly all got wet. The geysirs are situate on a plateau at the foot of the slopes of a mountain on the north side of a vast plain, estimated by us to be about thirty miles long and at places quite

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ten miles wide. The surface of the earth hereabouts greatly resembled the exterior of an oyster shell, and in places patches of grass, upon one of which we pitched the tent. Geysir and Strokr are the names of the two largest geysirs, and are, of course, very wonderful; but nature was so exhausted that our first thought was dinner. Erskine made an excursion to the nearest farmhouse with Zoega, about half a mile off, for provender and for cooking utensils. He brought word back they could not let us have anything to eat but were willing to kill a lamb; this we declined, so there was nothing for it but to sit down and each pluck a bird. By way of cooking utensils they had borrowed an old rusty kettle without a top to serve the double purpose of cooking these birds and making tea. Tying a string to the kettle and placing the birds in it we soon cooked them, and afterwards, as equally well, made tea. Our salt we found had assumed the colour of black pepper, but still had not lost its savour. Mr. Woolnough had arrived just before us and had got a little tent from the farmhouse to sleep in. The farmer there is hoping a good many tourists will come to the geysirs, as he has a tent for their accommodation, but

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he evidently does not think these tourists will want to eat. Travellers coming here, of course, hope to see the great geysir boil over; it is, however, very uncertain when this grand phenomenon takes place, and we were much disappointed to hear through Zoega that a great boiling over had taken place the day before and it was not probable another would happen for some days. During the evening we provoked Strokr by throwing in lumps of turf, and in a few minutes he boiled over, throwing up a mighty stream of water at least 50 or 60 feet. The whole place is literally honeycombed with hot-water springs; we made the diameter of the bowl of Geysir to measure about 60 feet. There was nothing else to see but small ponds of hot water. The whole scene was altogether dreary and highly suggestive from the sulphurous smell of a close proximity to the traditional realms of his Satanic majesty. It was our original intention to stop here two days, but, owing to the region being so uninviting, it was decided, after solemn conclave, to move off to Thingvallir next morning.

Sunday, July 17.—Just as we were going to sleep last night we were much startled by the earth under

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us shaking, accompanied by a terrible growl, and then the geysir immediately began to boil over; we called out to Zoega to come and undo the tent, but after a few seconds he said the water was going down and it was not likely that the eruption would continue, so we went to sleep. On getting out of the tent about 5.30 the sun was shining brightly, but the steam from the geysir was blowing towards us, and its peculiar sulphurous smell was anything but pleasant. The prospect of the luxury of a warm bath turned everyone out early, and we selected a spot where the water from the geysir had become sufficiently cool to render a dip possible. We, indeed, wanted a bath, as we had not had our clothes off for four days. Some of us had just got our socks off and commenced operations, when the geysir proceeded to growl as it did last night, and then boil over for a few seconds, but it went down, and so we were again disappointed in not witnessing a great eruption. At 8.30, after breakfast (at which, by the bye, we had no porridge, the kettle could not make that), we started for Thingvallir, ten hours' ride, not in the best of humours; but before we went we took a solemn leave of the elderly gentleman of

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whose abode this frightful hole might with reason be deemed the entrance. We placed in a champagne bottle a document containing the following solemn words—"We are off, Sire," and after walking, in single file, with reverent gait round the horrible pit, we uncovered our heads and I hurled the bottle into the middle of the abyss, and we walked away. Mr. Woolnough managed to start shortly before us, having secured a pony from a farm near by. As he mounted, I suggested to him the impropriety of travelling on Sunday, but he laughingly replied that he could not conscientiously remain in such a place on Sunday. Here there was abundance of game, both curlew and plover, and Zoega told me there were wild swans one day's ride into the interior. On our route, we met two farmers' wives on horseback; they appeared as though going to church, which edifice, however, was not visible. Evidently these ladies were swells, as they rode side saddle. After an hour or so we had to stop at a farm-house to shoe one of the ponies, and were invited into the guest room. Leading out of this room was a sort of cupboard, without any window, the sleeping chamber for guests. I should think its

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dimensions were hardly five feet square. It had evidently been used last night by a native and not by a guest, the floor being in a most disgusting state, resulting from the revolting habit I have before mentioned having been freely indulged in by the late occupant. As we sat in the guest room taking our coffee, a small boy, belonging to the family, went in for the purpose of cleaning the place. Continuing our route, we came to the Bruárá river. We had heard there was a bridge in Iceland, and only one, and a very odd erection it appears to English eyes, spanning only the deep, middle portion of the stream. Half way to Thingvallir was made about 1.30, and at a farmhouse we again had coffee. The natives were much amused by looking at the watches, penknives, whistles, and in fact everything we had in our pockets. Leaving this place, hot springs on the shore of a large lake were visited; the water continually boils over there to the height of three or four feet. After riding some hours over an especially bad track, at 7.30 we arrived at the minister's house at Thingvallir. The parsonage house and church constituted the village. Obtaining leave from the minister (who

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spoke English), the tent was pitched in the churchyard, about three yards from the church door. Near to the church was a small, square bit of grass-covered ground, used as a burial ground, fenced round by a stone wall. The church was built of wood, the exterior being tarred. Going to the kitchen to prepare dinner, I was much struck to find that wood was obtainable for fuel. This was the first I had seen. But in the vicinity of Thingvallir, there is a small brushwood growing, as well as an abundance of moss, which, after drying, is also used as fuel. We had now come to our last pot of soup and nearly the end of our other provisions. With unusual care I prepared the soup, but an unfortunate accident happened on its way from the kitchen to the tent. The extraordinary utensil used for the purpose of cooking got very hot, and the good woman (one of the minister's servants) took off her head shawl to hold it by. A head shawl is generally worn by the women, and I daresay this one had been worn for a great number of years, for it looked very greasy. Dreadful to relate, in removing it from her head she let if fall into the soup. After 45 miles on pony back, one can eat almost anything,

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but I had not the heart to run the risk of spoiling the enjoyment of the others by informing them of the accident that befel the soup until after dinner. Zoega told us that the butter we had eaten for some time past was made of sheep's milk; we had wondered at its peculiar taste and extreme whiteness. The minister sent us out some cheese, a rare treat, the first we had come across in an Icelandic establishment. C—— still suffered from the Sog river flies, the places were dreadfully irritable; I counted fifty bites on his face to-day, horrible bumps, his legs and arms were covered also. Zoega has very much improved in his manners, and so has Joe. They have nearly lost the habit which in nearly all Icelanders renders their presence unbearable. Being very tired we made up our minds to take an off day to-morrow and look about.

Monday, July 18.—Everybody was late this morning. About 11 o'clock, we called on Mr. Woolnough, in the guest room, who, I should have mentioned, had arrived here last evening just before ourselves, and we arranged to visit all the points of interest hereabouts together. The minister, Mr. Pawson, intimated he should be delighted to act as guide. We were shown

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the hill where the Althing met for a great number of centuries, and all the other interesting spots, and so spent a pleasant morning. During the afternoon, Mr. Pawson invited us to dine with Mr. Woolnough in the guest room. I suppose proximity to Reykjavik is the reason for the guest room and bed chamber being so much better arranged and furnished than those we have been accustomed to lately. Our dinner consisted of boiled trout, brown bread, curds, cake, and coffee. Mr. Pawson excused himself from dining with us, saying he had just had some curds. We were told it was usual for the husband in Iceland to take meals with his guests, while the wife has the honour of waiting upon him. During the evening, we went down to the lake for wild duck, but had no luck, but I do not think we ever saw so many curlew as we saw to-night.

Tuesday, July 19.—Yesterday we had fed the minister's fowls at the tent door in the churchyard. About 2.30 this morning an old cockerel walked round the tent crowing lustily, greatly to our satisfaction. We rose at 5.30 and went out, and had a shot at some ravens, but seeing some ducks on the water a little way off, I asked Zoega if he would like to go

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and have a shot while our toilet proceeded. He took one shot, and presently came back complaining the gun had too much powder, as it knocked him nearly backward and cut his finger. We forgot the annoyance the cockerel had caused us in waking us at 2.30, when boiled eggs appeared for breakfast, the second time only since we had been in Iceland; and weren't we in a good humour when we commenced striking our tent for the last time. It was quickly packed up, and we were soon ready for the ride to Reykjavik. Just before mounting, a young fellow rode up with two pack ponies to see the minister, and Mr. Pawson told us a marriage is to take place in the church on Thursday; and that this new comer had brought the provisions for the marriage feast. The cooking of the good things is to take place in the minister's kitchen. After the ceremony, the wedding feast is to be held in the guest room. We took leave of Mr. Pawson, and at 8.30 were *en route* for Reykjavik. On the way a good bag of plover and curlew was made for the ship's company. Our way lay over vast sterile plains and rugged lava beds, and we did not come even in sight of a single farmhouse all day. A little after mid-day

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we had to stop to rest and change the ponies. Our luncheon was biscuit powder only, the biscuits had got so dreadfully smashed by the shaking they had had in the boxes on the ponies' backs, there was nothing left but powder—in fact, for two or three days we had had small pieces only. At 4.30 we rode into Reykjavik. Just outside the town we met some Englishmen going towards Thingvallir, who had just arrived by the *Cameons* from England. Zoega had ridden forward for a photographer to have his apparatus ready and take our photographs as soon we reached the town, and as we rode up he took us before we dismounted. Taking a boat we rowed to the *Cameons* at once. The captain received us heartily, and we made him a present of the birds shot during the day. The *Cameons* was to start back for Scotland on Friday, and at our request we were allowed to take our berths and live and sleep on board from to-night. There were no letters for us at the post-office, but the captain said he had one in his cabin for me, and immediately went and fetched it.

Wednesday, July 20, was devoted to packing up and making purchases. The *Cameons* had brought

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out a few passengers, not many. One gentleman came to me and said, "Are you Mr. C——?" and told me his name was Neish. He asked after Carrie, Alice, and Emma, and said he remembered me at Cambridge. He was going to the Sog river fishing. We gave him all the wrinkles we could, feelingly mentioning the midges. Our American friends had returned to Reykjavik also, and invited us to dinner at their lodgings in the town. The Icelandic dishes were more peculiar than satisfying. Our friends gave us a most pressing invitation to visit them next year in America. Mr. Woolnough had taken up his quarters in the steamer, it being the best hotel he could find. Our Belgian friend is also here, so that, notwithstanding the troubles and trials we had gone through in the interior, we have all turned up in time to catch the ship back to Scotland.

Thursday, July 21.—The captain told me Mr. Barrington had tried to take the depth of the geysir and had found some sort of obstruction at 46 fathoms; the actual crater was 20 feet in diameter, the basin, of course, being much larger. The ponies bred on the sea-shore frequently eat dried cod fish bones. At Thingvallir I saw an instance of this. The farmers take

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loads of these bones on the ponies' backs for eating or making soup during winter. We met a convoy of this kind, and one of our ponies snatched from one of the loads a bone and ate it like a dog would. They also eat dried seaweed. I had noticed at one farm-house a woman cutting grass for hay which was growing on the house. In cold weather during the winter I could not make out how the natives kept themselves warm as there are no fireplaces in the houses, and Zoega told me that as many people as possible squeezed into one room, and if that does not result in generating warmth they drive the sheep into the house!

Friday, July 22.—We spent a few hours on shore this morning in completing our purchases, and then hastened on board before 12 o'clock, the anchor was weighed at 12.15, and we were off home. Our passengers numbered 14, amongst them were two ladies, Mrs. and Miss Lancaster, from Wales. The harbour, as we steamed out, was as smooth as a mill pond, but after rounding Cape Reykjanes and passing Westmann Islands we fell in with rough weather and had one of the worse passages on record. I won't say anything about the terrible ordeal we went through, it is

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sufficient to say it was ten times worse than the outward passage. On the following Tuesday we ran into Thurso, and the captain, having previously offered to send telegrams ashore, signalled for a boat to come out to take them. Granton was reached the following morning, and after taking cordial farewells of all our fellow passengers at 9.30, the captain sent us ashore, accompanied by the Belgian in his gig; we caught the express for town, where we bade adieu to the Belgian, who was going on to Brussels that night. After a highly interesting trip, in which we have met with strange experiences and run a few risks, we are again restored to the bosoms of our families more than ever able and ready to appreciate the comforts of home.

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